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UNCLAS BOGOTA 006598

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT FOR INL/LP

E.O. 12358: N/A

TAGS: [SNAR](#) [MOPS](#) [MASS](#) [CO](#)

SUBJECT: Four Dead, Two Helicopters Lost in Colombian
Military Operations

1. (SBU) Summary: Colombian Military forces lost four dead and two helicopters within a span of 48 hours. On July 8, a Plan Colombia-provided UH1-HII (Huey II) operated by the Colombian Army crashed as a result of hostile fire, resulting in four fatalities, including one Colombian national employed by a U.S. contractor. On July 10, a Colombian Air Force UH-60 helicopter made a hard landing and suffered severe damage. There were no casualties reported as a result of this incident. Both events are under investigation. End summary.

2. (SBU) On July 8, a Colombian Army UH1-HII helicopter that was part of a multi-ship gun support mission in Arauca Department (north east Colombia) came under enemy fire. The aircraft reportedly received multiple impacts and then proceeded to return to its base at Saravena, Arauca Department. When approximately 5.3 miles from Saravena (N 06 52.06, W 071 49.16), the aircraft radioed that it was experiencing a major malfunction and thereafter reported that the aircraft was going down. An accompanying aircraft observed the aircraft make a hard landing, spin about, and the tail section separate from the fuselage.

3. (SBU) A rescue helicopter was immediately launched from Saravena. The rescue aircraft arrived at the scene, determined that three of the four crewmembers had perished, and transported the one surviving crewmember to Saravena. This crewmember subsequently died. One of the casualties was a Colombian national employed by a U.S. contractor. Remains of the crewmembers and the wreckage were recovered on July 9 and an investigation is underway.

4. (SBU) On July 10, a Colombian Air Force UH-60 Gunship (Arpia) assigned to Combat Command 5 (Rio Negro) was performing night operations near Bahi, Antioquia Department. The aircraft encountered weather and attempted an instrument landing at an airfield in Carepa but was unable to land. The aircraft subsequently attempted a landing at what appeared to be a soccer field or other open area but the main rotor struck an object, possibly a wire, and went down hard. There were no fatalities. The CACOM 5 Commander reports that the aircraft suffered "50 percent damage." An investigation is underway and the aircraft is being disassembled and trucked to an airfield where it will be loaded on to a C-130 for transport to Rio Negro. We expect that the helicopter will be inoperable for a long time before it can be returned to service, if ever.

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